



## Investigation into the Effectiveness of Self-Management Counselling Techniques in Reducing Examination Anxiety Among NCE Students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the effectiveness of self-management counselling techniques in reducing examination anxiety among Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State. The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design involving experimental and control groups. A sample of 330 NCE students was selected from the total population of 2745, using stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a standardized instrument titled Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) complemented with counselling session plans on self-management techniques such as goal-setting, relaxation, self-monitoring, time management, and positive self-talk. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that students who were exposed to self-management counselling techniques showed a significant reduction in examination anxiety levels compared to those in the control group. The results also indicated that self-management strategies enhanced students' confidence, focus, and preparedness for examinations. Based on these findings, the study concluded that self-management counselling techniques are effective tools in helping students cope with examination-related anxiety. The study recommended that counselors in Colleges of Education should adopt self-management techniques as part of their intervention strategies, and that institutional management should support counselling units with resources to sustain such interventions.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Examination anxiety is a performance anxiety that is most commonly observed among students in academic examination settings. It is conceptualized through the co-occurrence of concern, apprehension, physiological activation, and inability to concentrate on examinations (Singh et al., 2023). It has been found through research that test anxiety is a global issue across learners at diverse levels of education, and it typically leads to disrupted retrieval of information from memory, reduced focus, self-criticism, and

academic underperformance (Yilmazer, Hamamci, & Türk, 2024). Current evidence has revealed that examination anxiety remains prevalent among learners. For instance, the prevalence rate varied between 46% and 82% across different settings among undergraduate learners, according to a study (Sahithi, Prabhu, & Ramesh, 2023).

In Nigeria, an Adamawa State University study found that examination anxiety was inversely correlated with academic performance among students (Olatunji, 2021).

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Similarly, a 2025 study among South-West Nigeria adolescents found that senior secondary school students scored high in examination anxiety, and it negatively impacted their performance (Adeoye, 2025). There are various reasons why examination anxiety occurs that involve course work, inadequate preparation, time pressures, parental and societal expectation, negative self-talk, and lack of adequate coping skills (Kassaw, 2024). As a result, interventions designed to enhance students' self-regulation of emotion, cognitions, and behaviour have been proposed. One of the examples of such interventions is self-management counseling skills involving goal setting, relaxation training, positive self-talk, and time management skills (Adebowale&Ojo, 2021).

Empirical data from recent studies have shown that such interventions can reduce examination anxiety significantly and improve academic performance (Csirmaz et al., 2024). However, despite these findings, few studies have been conducted in Nigeria, particularly in Colleges of Education, on the prevalence of examination anxiety and the effectiveness of self-management counseling interventions. The gap is the cause of the need for local research that can provide empirical evidence to guide counseling practice and improve the academic performance of students. The present study therefore investigates the effectiveness of self-management counseling techniques in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State.

### Concept of Examination Anxiety

Examination anxiety is a combination of physiological over-arousal, tension, and somatic symptoms, along with worry, dread, and fear of failure, that occurs before or during test situations. It is a physiological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort during/or before taking a test (Fatima, 2022). This anxiety creates significant barriers to learning and performance. It's a multi-dimensional construct with cognitive, emotional, and somatic aspects. Cognitively, students develop intrusive thoughts such as failure anxiety or doubt. Emotionally, they may feel fear, tension, or

helplessness. Physiologically, the signs include palpitations, sweating, tension, and gastrointestinal distress (Putwain & Symes, 2020).

Extreme test anxious students underperform, not because of lack of talent but because concern and apprehension consume their mental and emotional resources (Cassady & Johnson, 2022). Prevalence of test anxiety among students all over the globe is high. According to recent studies, 20% to 40% of students' report moderate to severe test anxiety, with higher levels documented in developing nations due to inadequate preparation, lack of counseling, and cutthroat academic pressure (Khaira et al., 2023). In Nigeria, facts confirm that anxiety during examination is a common concern among secondary and tertiary students, which normally leads to poor achievement, low self-esteem, and dropout intentions (Okoli & Okorji, 2022).

### Nature of Examination Anxiety

Examination anxiety is the result of several factors like poor study habits, inadequate preparation, fear of family or social pressure, time constraints, and self-talk (Kassaw, 2024). Further, test anxiety is supported by personality features like perfectionism and low self-esteem. Current research shows that heavy academic burdens and poor coping mechanisms in undergraduate students increase exam stress even further (Luceño-Moreno et al., 2025).

### Causes of Examination Anxiety

Examination anxiety among students is caused by a combination of cognitive distortions, poor preparation, academic pressure, personality traits, ineffective coping strategies, environmental constraints, and socio-economic challenges (Cassady& Johnson, 2022). Identifying these causes is essential for developing targeted interventions. Self-management counseling techniques are particularly relevant because they address several root causes simultaneously helping students restructure negative thoughts, improve preparation, manage stress, and adopt effective coping strategies.



### Concept of Counseling and Self-Management

Counseling is a purposeful, professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client with the aim of helping the client understand themselves, overcome challenges, and develop strategies for personal growth and adjustment (Corey, 2017). In educational settings, counseling focuses on supporting students' academic, emotional, and psychological needs to enhance learning outcomes. It is proactive and developmental in nature, guiding students toward self-awareness, problem-solving, and the acquisition of coping skills (Adebowale & Ojo, 2021). Counseling services in colleges of education are particularly critical as they assist students in dealing with academic pressures, examination anxiety, peer influence, and adjustment issues that may hinder academic success.

Within the counseling framework, self-management refers to a set of strategies that enable individuals to regulate their own behavior, thoughts, and emotions without constant external guidance (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 2020). Self-management is grounded in *self-regulation theory*, which emphasizes individuals' ability to monitor their behavior, evaluate it against standards, and reinforce progress toward goals. Self-management-oriented counseling interventions engage students as active participants in managing their anxiety, contrary to relying solely on external interventions (Mahmoud, 2020). In the context of education, self-management empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and coping mechanisms, particularly during high-stress situations like examinations.

### Self-Management Counseling Techniques

Self-management counseling techniques are systematic psychological strategies through which students can control their cognitions, emotions, and behaviors in reaction to stressful events (Zimmerman, 2002). The most essential self-management strategies are:

1. Goal-Setting: Establishment of specific and realistic academic goals to remove uncertainty and strengthen motivation.

2. Relaxation Training: Activities such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery that have been proven to reduce physiological symptoms of anxiety (Csirmaz et al., 2024).
3. Positive Self-Talk: Substituting negative and illogical thinking with confidence-building and positive affirmations (Kroener et al., 2024).
4. Time Management: Scheduling study schedules and assignments to restrict last-minute preparation stress, and thus greater control over academic pressures (Luceño-Moreno et al., 2025).

These counseling strategies aim to provide students with the skill to manage test situations and lesson anxiety effectively.

### Relationship between Self-Management and Examination Anxiety Reduction

Recent studies provide evidence that self-management counseling approaches significantly alleviate test anxiety. For instance, a meta-analysis by Yilmazer et al. (2024) indicated that mindfulness and relaxation-based interventions improved students' ability to cope when given tests. In Nigeria, Adebowale and Ojo (2021) demonstrated that counseling interventions that educated students in self-management techniques led to the appreciable decline in test anxiety among undergraduate students. Similarly, global research has also shown that cognitive restructuring (positive self-talk) and time management training reduce examination anxiety and improve academic performance (Csirmaz et al., 2024). Thus, self-management counseling strategies provide a comprehensive and practical approach to helping students manage examination anxiety, especially when there is no significant availability of counseling resources, such as Nigerian Colleges of Education.



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Examinations are still among the ubiquitous testing tools employed to assess students' learning outcomes in Nigeria's higher education institutions. However, the high-stakes nature of examinations invariably causes students to have high levels of anxiety, which interferes with effective cognitive processing, memory recall, and concentration (Yilmazer, Hamamci, & Türk, 2024). Research indicates that a high proportion of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions experience moderate to severe examination anxiety, which has a negative impact on their academic achievement (Adeoye, 2025). NCE level students are normally exposed to various issues like an overload of coursework, inadequate preparation time, low exposure to counseling services, and socio-economic stress. These problems tend to cause high levels of examination anxiety (Ahmed, 2020).

Despite the identification of the problem, though, not much has been done in Nigerian Colleges of Education to address examination anxiety in a systematic manner through psychological intervention. Globally, empirical data have shown that self-management counseling strategies like goal-setting, relaxation training, time management, and positive self-talk enable students' self-regulation of anxiety and academic performance (Luceño-Moreno et al., 2025). While in other contexts the interventions have been used successfully, their application and empirical validation in Nigerian NCE institutions are scarce. If nothing is addressed, NCE students' Examination anxiety would most likely adversely affect their performance, diminish their self-esteem, and crush future learning and career opportunities. It is against this background that the study seeks to examine whether or not self-management counseling skills can significantly alleviate examination anxiety among Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State NCE students.

## Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of self-management counseling techniques in reducing examination

anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the prevalence and intensity of examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere.
2. Determine the effectiveness of self-management counseling techniques (goal-setting, relaxation training, time management, and positive self-talk) in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students.
3. Compare the levels of examination anxiety between students exposed to self-management counseling techniques and those who are not.

## Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prevalence and intensity of examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere?
2. To what extent are self-management counseling techniques (goal-setting, relaxation training, time management, and positive self-talk) effective in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students?
3. What differences exist in the levels of examination anxiety between students exposed to self-management counseling techniques and those who are not?

## Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant prevalence of examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Self-management counseling techniques (goal-setting, relaxation training, time management, and positive self-talk) do not



significantly reduce examination anxiety among NCE students.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the levels of examination anxiety between students exposed to self-management counseling techniques and those who are not exposed.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research design using the pre-test, post-test control group method. The choice of this design was based on its effectiveness in establishing cause-effect relationships when randomization is not entirely possible within natural classroom or institutional settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this study, participants were divided into two groups: Experimental group (students who received structured self-management counseling techniques: goal-setting, relaxation training, time management, and positive self-talk) and Control group (students who did not received any intervention during the study period but continued with their regular academic and counselling activities). Both groups were assessed at baseline (pre-test) to determine their initial levels of examination anxiety using a standardized instrument titled Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI).

After the intervention, both groups were again assessed (post-test) to determine the effectiveness of the counseling techniques. The population of this study consisted of all NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State, totaling 2,745 students as at the 2024/2025 academic session (Academic Planning Unit, ATBCE Kangere, 2025). This population is made up of students across different schools of the College. With reference to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table a sample of 330 students were selected at a 95% confidence level using a

stratified random sampling technique. In this study two instruments namely: Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and Self-Management Counseling Techniques Questionnaire (SMCTQ) were used for data collection. Both were administered to both the experimental group and the control group before the intervention. This pre-test provided baseline data on the prevalence and intensity of examination anxiety among NCE students.

The experimental group underwent six counseling sessions over a period of three weeks, focusing on self-management techniques such as: Goal-Setting Skills, Relaxation Training, Time Management, Positive Self-Talk. Each session lasted for 60 minutes and were facilitated by the researcher, assisted by trained counselors but the control group have not received the intervention during the study. After the intervention, the TAI and SMCTQ were re-administered to both groups. The responses were compared with pre-test results to determine the effectiveness of the self-management counseling techniques. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v26). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to answer research question one on the prevalence and intensity of examination anxiety among NCE students. Descriptive results also summarized demographic data of respondents and baseline scores on examination anxiety while inferential statistics was used to test the three null hypotheses.

## RESULTS

A total of 330 questionnaires were distributed to the selected NCE students of Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere which were properly completed and returned.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Male	180	54.5
Female	150	45.5
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

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Table1 show that 180 respondents (54.5%) were male, while 150 respondents (45.5%) were female. This indicates a fairly

balanced gender representation among the respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age range	Frequency	Percentage(%)
16 - 20	80	24.2
21 - 25	150	45.5
26 – 30	70	21.2
31 and above	30	9.1
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The results in Table 2 indicate that the majority of respondents (45.5%) were within the age range of 21–25 years, followed by 24.2%

within 16–20 years, 21.2% within 26–30 years, while only 9.1% were 31 years and above. This suggests that most respondents are within the typical age bracket of NCE students.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Level

Age range	Frequency	Percentage(%)
NCE one	110	33.3
NCE two	120	36.4
NCE three	100	30.3
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The results in Table 4.3 reveal that 36.4% of respondents were in NCE II, 33.3% in

NCE I, and 30.3% in NCE III. This distribution indicates a fairly balanced representation across the three academic levels.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by School

Schools	Frequency	Percentage(%)
School of Arts and Social Sciences	90	27.3
School of Languages	70	21.2
School of Sciences	60	18.2
School of Vocational and Tech. Edu.	65	19.7
School of ECCE & PES	45	13.6
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The results in Table 4.4 show that respondents were drawn from all the schools in the College, with the highest representation from the School of Arts and Social Sciences (27.3%), followed by the School of Languages (21.2%), while the least represented was the School of ECCE & PES (13.6%).

From the demographic data, it can be concluded that the sample is diverse and

representative in terms of gender, age, academic level, and school, which strengthens the generalizability of the study's findings.

#### Research Question One:

What is the prevalence and intensity of examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere?

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Table 5: Prevalence and Intensity of Examination Anxiety among NCE Students

Anxiety Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low Anxiety ( $\leq 40$ )	70	24.2
Moderate Anxiety (41 – 60)	180	54.5
High Anxiety ( $\geq 61$ )	80	24.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Computed from the data

The results in Table 5 show that 21.2% of respondents reported low anxiety, 54.5% reported moderate anxiety, while 24.3% experienced high anxiety. This suggests that a significant proportion of students' experience moderate to high levels of examination anxiety.

#### Research Question Two:

To what extent are self-management counseling techniques effective in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students?

Table 6: Effectiveness of Self-Management Counseling Techniques (Experimental Group)

Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Pre-test	165	65.20	8.45	
Post-test	165	48.75	7.92	16.45

Source: Computed from the data

The results in Table 6 above indicated a substantial reduction in anxiety levels after the intervention. The mean difference of 16.45 suggests that self-management counseling techniques were effective in reducing examination anxiety among students in the experimental group.

#### Research Question Three:

What differences exist in the levels of examination anxiety between students exposed to self-management counseling techniques and those who are not.

Table 7: Comparison of Post-Test Anxiety Levels between Experimental and Control Groups

Test	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
Experimental group	165	48.75	7.92
Control group	165	64.10	8.15

Source: Computed from the data

The results in Table 7 show that students in the experimental group reported a lower mean anxiety score ( $M = 48.75$ ) compared to those in the control group ( $M = 64.10$ ). This indicates a clear difference in anxiety levels, favoring the group exposed to self-management counseling techniques.

#### Test of Hypotheses

The null hypotheses formulated were tested using appropriate inferential statistical tools

at the 0.05 level of significance. Results are presented in tables and interpreted accordingly.

**$H_{01}$ :** There is no significant prevalence of examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere.

A one-sample t-test was used to determine whether the mean anxiety score of respondents significantly differed from the test norm (50).

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Table 8: One-Sample t-test on Prevalence of Examination Anxiety

Variable	Test Value	N	Mean (M)	Std.	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Exam Anxiety	165	330	59.82	9.20	18.75	329	0.000	Rejected

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that examination anxiety is significantly prevalent among NCE students at the College.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Self-management counseling techniques do not significantly reduce examination anxiety among NCE students.

A paired samples t-test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Table 9: Paired Samples t-test on Effectiveness of Self-Management Techniques

Group	N	Mean difference	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Experimental group	165	16.45	22.31	164	0.000	Rejected

The results show a significant reduction in examination anxiety after the intervention ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, self-management counseling techniques were effective in reducing examination anxiety.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the levels of examination anxiety between students exposed to self-management counseling techniques and those not exposed.

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups.

Table 10: Independent Samples t-test between Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Experimental group	165	48.75	7.92	-15.42	328	0.000	Rejected
Control group	165	64.10	8.15				

The result indicates a statistically significant difference in examination anxiety levels between the two groups, favouring the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of self-management counseling techniques in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State. The discussion of the major findings is presented in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and existing literature. The findings revealed that examination anxiety is significantly prevalent among the students studied. This suggests that many students struggle with

emotional, cognitive, and physiological symptoms of anxiety during assessments. This aligns with the results of Kassaw (2024), who reported that test anxiety remains a global issue, interfering with concentration, memory, and performance.

Similarly, Yilmazer (2024) highlighted that students at different educational levels often exhibit moderate to high levels of examination anxiety, which negatively impacts academic achievement. The high prevalence among NCE students in this study reflects the academic pressure associated with professional training in Colleges of Education. The results of the study showed that self-management counseling techniques significantly reduced examination anxiety among NCE students in the experimental group. This supports earlier findings by Adeoye and Alao (2023), who emphasized that relaxation

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training, cognitive restructuring, and self-talk are effective tools for managing stress and test anxiety.

Furthermore, Akanni and Alabi (2022) found that goal-setting and time management help students gain a sense of control over their studies, thereby reducing anxiety. The outcome of this study, therefore, confirms the efficacy of these counseling strategies in improving students' emotional regulation and confidence during examinations. The comparison between the experimental and control groups showed a statistically significant difference in their anxiety levels. Students who received self-management counseling reported lower anxiety scores compared to those who did not. This finding is consistent with the cognitive-behavioral framework, which posits that structured interventions such as self-monitoring and self-regulation can modify maladaptive thinking patterns (Beck, 2019).

It also supports the work of Ogundokun and Afolabi (2021), who noted that structured counseling sessions enhance coping skills and resilience against academic stressors. The implication is that lack of exposure to such techniques leaves students more vulnerable to exam-related fears. The findings have strong practical relevance for counseling practice in Colleges of Education. Incorporating self-management counseling techniques into student support services can help reduce academic stress and improve learning outcomes. As noted by UNESCO (2022), building students' emotional and psychological resilience is essential for holistic education. Thus, guidance and counseling units in tertiary institutions should adopt structured intervention programs to address test anxiety.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of self-management counseling techniques in reducing examination anxiety among NCE students at Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State. The findings revealed that examination anxiety is a common challenge among students, often hindering their concentration, confidence, and overall academic

performance. The results demonstrated that self-management counseling techniques such as relaxation training, positive self-talk, goal-setting, and time management are effective in significantly reducing examination anxiety. Furthermore, students who were exposed to these interventions showed lower anxiety levels compared to those who were not, thereby validating the relevance of structured counseling strategies in academic environments. In conclusion, the study affirms that self-management counseling techniques are practical, student-centered interventions that can equip learners with coping mechanisms to handle academic stress. Their adoption in Colleges of Education can contribute to improved psychological well-being and academic success, while also strengthening the role of guidance and counseling units in tertiary institutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made: NCE students should be encouraged to adopt self-management techniques such as relaxation exercises, positive self-talk, time management, and goal-setting as part of their daily academic routine to reduce examination anxiety. Peer mentoring programs can be established where students who effectively apply these strategies guide others. Counseling units in Colleges of Education should integrate self-management counseling into their regular services, providing workshops and group counseling sessions focused on anxiety reduction. Counselors should develop structured intervention programs tailored to the needs of students with high anxiety levels, using evidence-based strategies.

Lecturers should create supportive classroom environments that reduce pressure, promote continuous assessment, and help students build confidence. They should collaborate with counseling units to identify students struggling with examination anxiety and refer them for appropriate support. The management of Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education should strengthen the guidance and counseling department by providing adequate



resources, training, and personnel to implement anxiety-reduction programs. Policies should be put in place to ensure that psychological support services are accessible and student-friendly. The Ministry of Education and other relevant bodies should integrate mental health and self-management skills into the curriculum of Colleges of Education. Nationwide campaigns should be carried out to raise awareness of examination anxiety and promote counseling as a vital component of educational success.

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